

Madam Speaker, across our country there are communities, businesses, and families that continue to struggle to escape an economic recession that has caused far reaching hardship and too much pain. Congress has a responsibility to ensure the economic security of the American people, as well as defend the national security of the nation. This appropriations bill does not adequately meet the needs of the American people and I will not vote to pass it.

Today's vote on the emergency supplemental appropriation provides \$37 billion to continue the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, plus nearly \$3 billion for the crisis in Haiti. There is also \$13 billion in funds for Vietnam War era veterans which I strongly support. To my great dismay the funds previously passed by the House to address urgent domestic needs such as securing our borders, preventing 100,000 teachers from layoffs, creating youth summer jobs, and financing Pell grants for higher education have been stripped from this bill by the U.S. Senate. Unlike the war funding which is financed by deficit spending, the House fully paid for the domestic priorities that were removed. It is simply unacceptable to abandon the serious needs of our communities while calling the war in Afghanistan - the longest war in the history of the United States - an "emergency."

Since 2001, following the September 11th attack on the U.S., I have supported military action in Afghanistan to remove the Taliban from power and eliminate al-Qaeda. During this time U.S. and NATO troops have bravely pursued a military strategy that has provided the Afghan people with an opportunity to rebuild their country and determine their own future. It is now time for Afghans to be fully responsible their own destiny without a dependence on a 100,000 U.S. troops.

After nine years of war and more than \$300 billion of war funds added to our national debt, it is clear that an open ended U.S. military presence in Afghanistan is not acceptable to Afghans or Americans. President Obama is correct to have established a July 2011 date to begin withdrawal of U.S. forces. Still I question whether an additional eleven months of U.S. troops in combat will result in a security and political environment that will be significantly improved from what exists today. I believe now is the time for a movement away from an expanded military presence in Afghanistan towards a strategic drawdown of U.S. troops and a refocus on a counter-terrorism strategy to prevent al-Qaeda from again taking root.

On July 1, 2010 during debate on this supplemental bill I supported amendments to move towards ending the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan by putting limits on the funds appropriated. Unfortunately those amendments failed. I voted for the "Lee Amendment" to limit the use of military funding for Afghanistan to activities related to the safe withdrawal of troops and the continued protection of civilian and military personnel in the country. I also voted for the "McGovern, Obey, Jones Amendment" which calls for a plan for the safe, orderly and expeditious redeployment of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. Today's vote allows no such

amendments to be offered.

It was a surprise to listen today to one of my Republican colleagues, the Armed Services Committee ranking member, who stated during debate on this bill that the U.S. will succeed in Afghanistan if Congress only gives the military the "time, space and resources." This Republican call for apparently endless resources for Afghanistan is in sharp contrast to their policies here at home in which "NO" is their position on providing emergency assistance for our own citizens.

Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the courage and determination of all U.S. troops who are serving in Afghanistan or have served there since 2002. The Afghan people suffered mercilessly under the Taliban regime and it was U.S. and NATO troops who freed them from a medieval existence. It is not an appropriate role for U.S. troops to rebuild a country that has experienced 30 years of war nor can they provide on-going security for a government which has not earned the trust of its own people.

U.S. troops deserve a mission that is clear and achievable so they can return safely home with the knowledge that they have helped to keep America secure and allowed the Afghan people to make their own future. It is now time for the Afghan people to make that future.

I yield back my time.